



Human Services Committee Hearing
February 14, 2023

Testimony of Holly Hackett
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Keep the Promise Coalition

In Support of: H.B. 6616 An Act Concerning Expansion of Husky Health Benefits to Those Ineligible Due to Immigration Status

Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, and Distinguished members of the Human Services Committee,

I represent Keep the Promise Coalition (KTP), a grassroots group of CT advocates with lived experience of mental health conditions, addiction, and co-occurring disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to support H.B. 6616. We at Keep the Promise feel that access to healthcare is a human right. We feel strongly that everyone has access to especially behavioral health services.

No one should be denied healthcare can a chance at life because of their immigration status. If the pandemic has taught us anything its that we are only as healthy as our sickest neighbor. Undocumented immigrants and “legally present” immigrant adults in the U.S. less than 5 years are excluded from HUSKY (Medicaid/CHIP), Medicare, Access Health CT state exchange coverage and financial help, and private insurance coverage. 58% of the roughly 113,000 undocumented immigrants in CT do not have any form of health insurance coverage. Legislators are putting themselves between doctors and patients. Healthcare decisions should be between a patient and their doctor, if your doctor says you need a test or a treatment, you should be able to get it. Right now, the state of Connecticut decides for many immigrants what healthcare they are able to get and what they can’t.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed on December 10, 1948 by the United Nations. Here is Article 25 says, “1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. 2. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.” I think it is way past time that we finally adhere to Article 25 since we are the only industrialized nation in the world that doesn’t see healthcare as a human right.

Connecticut cannot afford to not pass H.B. 6616 investing in healthcare for immigrant

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communities is an investment in the future of Connecticut and will reduce healthcare costs in the long run. There will be a savings to hospitals in uncompensated care costs by roughly \$63.3 million. Connecticut has an emergency Medicaid program that covers emergency care to individuals who qualify based on income, regardless of immigration status. The costs for this program, about \$15 million in 2021 would most likely be reduced by insuring the immigrant community.

Expanding HUSKY to undocumented people is not a controversial issue! It is supported by a majority of Connecticut voters. 57% of voters support expanding HUSKY to ALL undocumented immigrants – including 84% of Democrats, 83% of Black voters, and 76% Latinx voters. The past two years have seen an outpouring of public support for extending HUSKY to undocumented communities. In 2022 the public hearing was over 12 hours long and included 200+ live testimonies of healthcare providers, immigrants, and organizations and 360 + written testimonies in support. The 2021 public hearing had similar numbers. With the increase in attention and building momentum on this issue, we expect such public support to further increase. Not acting on this issue would be a choice to look the other way and ignore the sizable support that exists for ensuring immigrants have access to healthcare.

Thank you for your time and consideration please pass H.B. 6616 because healthcare is a human right. It is also the fiscally responsible thing to do as well. I'd be happy to answer any questions.



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